

Preface

Community Development (CD) theory and practice have evolved through the years. For the Department of Community Development (DCD) of the University of the Philippines - College of Social Work and Community Development (UP-CSWCD), the last five decades of teaching CD created opportunities to re-think, interrogate and put forward emergent themes derived from community practices and development discourse.

The DCD Field Instruction Program (FIP) has remained the core of the CD curriculum. Most often, this is where praxis-oriented learning is grounded and nurtured for both faculty and students. This issue of the Philippine Journal of Social Development (PJSJ) is about community stories from the field as a new generation of CD practitioners engage in reflective and reflexive learning.

Praxis seems to be a common word for UP-CSWCD. Yet, its essence maybe lost in the fast-paced and complex world of everyday life. According to Paulo Freire (1984):

Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (p. 58)

In the process of weaving through action and reflection, CD practitioners undergo reflective learning as they make sense (understand/ analyze) and build on the lessons (re-imagine/ theorize) from field practice in the context of pro-poor and transformative development. Reflective learning questions beliefs and values particularly those which have become unquestioned and remain to be majority positions. It pays particular attention to the analysis of power relations (Reynolds, 1999). Parallel to this process is engaging in reflexive learning – or analyzing one’s own actions, thoughts, feelings, values, identity, and how these relate with other people, situations, and social structures. Reflexivity (as applied both in social research and in teaching) involves greater sensitivity on how one’s presence

affect the situation, and how the experience itself can challenge or transform one's thoughts and feelings.

Seven articles were selected for this issue and are presented in two parts. Part 1 showcases four different community experiences from which the authors derived new meanings and explanations about specific development concepts. Part 2 presents three articles based on the Field Instruction Program as the authors examine their experiences 'from within' as CD educators and development practitioners.

For Part 1, four CD concepts were explored: sustainable agriculture, organizing persons with disabilities (PWDs), development aggression, and participation. Reflective practice can take varied forms: by expanding the meaning of sustainable agriculture from the perspective of "agribistas" from Batangas (W. Awitan); or proposing 'Ka-Pasan' as an analytical framework to guide organizing PWDs based on the experiences of the Las Pinas Persons with Disabilities Federation, Inc. (P. Muego); or re-interpreting development programs as a form of aggression among indigenous peasant women from the Mountain Province and their communities (M. Teves); or deconstructing the meaning of participation based on the analysis of two cases, Bagong Silang and the Workers Cooperative of Caloocan (K. Hapal).

For Part 2, reflexivity is evident as the three authors attempt to integrate their FIP involvement with their past and present experiences to come up with alternative (or 'transformative') ways of thinking and doing. The articles examined the following themes: community-engaged scholarship, poverty, and teaching CD. Reflexive learning can provide spaces to re-imagine one's perspectives: by reiterating the significance of using feminist lens as an integral part of community-engaged scholarship (T. Barrameda); or by interrogating the narratives on poverty (V. Papa); or by 'stepping back' and reviewing one's learning journey as a CD educator (D. Lagos).

The articles focused on emergent concerns in CD practice as experienced in different settings. There were two recurring themes that were interwoven in the discussions: (1) community organizing and (2) development praxis. The CO-CD framework regards organizing work among marginalized groups as the core element of people-centered

development efforts. And the greater challenge for CD practitioners is to engage in praxis-oriented learning as part of development theorizing and transformative CD practice.

As we, the issue editors, read through the seven articles, we realized that all the authors are either students or alumni of the Department of Community Development – representing different generations of CD educators and practitioners with varied engagements and advocacies. Even though Prof. Barrameda teaches and is the current Chair of the Department of Women and Development Studies, she is an undergraduate and graduate alumnus of the DCD. We would like to think, therefore, that what the authors imbibed about Community Development grounded them to the primacy of field practice as basis for engaging in development discourse.

Ma. Theresa V. Tungpalan, Ph.D.

Ma. Linnea V. Tanchuling

Issue Editors

Reference:

Freire, P. (1984). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Books.

Reynolds, M. (1999). *Critical reflection and management education: rehabilitating less hierarchical approaches*. *Journal of Management Education*, 23 (5), 537-553.